

## Indiana Department of Environmental Management

**Lori F. Kaplan, Commissioner**

*Text as prepared for:* Partnering for Liveable Environments - "Kick-Off Event"

*Date presented:* September 6, 2000

*Location:* Murphy Park, New Harmony, Indiana

*(Text does not include verbatim comments)*

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Thank you, I am pleased to return to this wonderful community to inaugurate the "Partnering for Liveable Environments" program; this is the first event – anywhere in Indiana – for this new program which creates a partnership between IDEM and a local community.

We chose New Harmony because the town has demonstrated a strong desire to proactively address and resolve the environmental issues that affect the well being of this wonderfully historic community.

I have to think that the Harmonists and Robert Owen would look favorably upon the endeavor we launch this evening. He believed that individual character is molded by environment and can be improved in a society based on cooperation. In that light, our partnership is about making New Harmony and Indiana a cleaner, healthier place to live, work and raise a family.

We at the Indiana Department of Environmental Management have identified priorities on which the agency is focusing during this two-year period. One of these priorities, "Partnering for Liveable Environments," fosters relationships among state agencies and organizations to offer better services to Hoosier communities as they deal with pressing environmental issues.

As a part of this priority, IDEM has initiated a pilot project to assist two municipalities – a town and a small city – with **community-based/environmental planning and protection**.

We selected the town of New Harmony as a kick-off community because its town leaders recognize the importance of the environment and have clearly demonstrated an enthusiasm for improving their hometown's environment. While we will work with any community, but IDEM especially wants to partner with communities whose leaders share a commitment to the environment.

New Harmony has What it takes...**all** of **you** in this community, working cooperatively with us, to plan the future of New Harmony.

For this reason, IDEM wants to provide technical assistance to connect New Harmony with the appropriate resources needed "to make your own informed decisions and to find your own solutions."

An additional goal of this pilot project is to evaluate the resources needed within our agency to truly assist smaller communities, with limited resources of their own, that have a similar desire to proactively address significant environmental issues.

Among my many hopes for this partnership is that it demonstrates to all Hoosiers that IDEM is here to serve. That we really are here to help them accomplish their goal but in a way that protects the environment while protecting, nurturing and adding to the quality of life for all Hoosiers.

IDEM's Southwest Regional Office will assist you by providing guidance. Leading that effort will be the office's director, Judy Dicus Thomann, who joins us this evening.

This pilot project formalizes the relationship that already exists between the office staff and your community. The office will continue to provide accurate and appropriate information for your use in **community-based** environmental planning and protection.

Tonight's event is a good example of this relationship. You will find stations all around the park that feature key information about environmental issues affecting New Harmony.

In order to provide New Harmony even more useful information and assistance, this pilot project also extends to your community the resources of IDEM's sister agencies.

Thank you in advance for allowing us, IDEM, to partner with you, New Harmony, to enhance the environmental health of this historical community.

Now, I believe at this time Rodney Stockment will come to the podium to explain in detail the logistics of tonight's event and what you will find out here. We have games and goodies for the kids as well as stations focusing on various environmental topics. Please browse the tables and feel free to discuss issues with our IDEM representatives.

And, finally, I do want to offer a special "thank you" to each of you for joining us this evening and to Rodney for working with IDEM's Community Relations staff – LaKenya Johnson, the director, and Rachel O'Neil for helping Rodney coordinate this event.